

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**  
**Project HIRE success story**  
**Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation—2010**

As a Bellevue College Project H.I.R.E. candidate who has recently been offered an excellent job as a Program and Management Analyst for a federal agency, I have no doubt that I would not be employed today had I not received the assistance, support, and guidance provided by this great program through Bellevue College. Prior to this program and as noted below, I initiated my job search immediately after losing my job and desperately tried to land an interview for any job, but was without success until I became involved with this invaluable program at the college.

My journey to find another job after being laid off on October 15, 2008:

Immediately after being laid off in the midst of the current recession I had my resume professionally written, started networking as much as possible, and applied for as many jobs as I could find in hopes of increasing my odds of landing a new job within a reasonable amount of time. I continued to search for any job throughout the ensuing 20 months, but in spite of my professional experience, formal education, networking, and innumerable job applications, I was unsuccessful in receiving an invitation for a single interview, let alone an offer of employment.

With an exceptionally bleak employment outlook and being fully aware of the unique challenges facing me as a disabled job-seeker, I undertook the Project Management Program at Bellevue College through the King County Workforce Development Council while continuing my search for employment. As a student and job-seeker with a disability, I was exceptionally interested in Project H.I.R.E. from the moment I was apprised of the program in May of 2010. Shortly thereafter, I met the Project H.I.R.E. team (led by Shanon Magnusson, the Bellevue College Program Manager) and became a participant in Project H.I.R.E. at the college.

As a participant in this program, it took very little time to see the exceptional difference that this program and the Bellevue College project staff afford BC Project H.I.R.E. candidates resulting from their development of strong relationships with Human Resource Departments in various organizations. In addition and as equally valuable, the Project H.I.R.E. program allows the staff to make an outstanding difference in assisting disabled job-seekers by providing critical support, highly beneficial guidance, and offering incredibly helpful weekly workshops and professional assistance regarding the critical elements of an effective job-search including:

- Maximizing the power of networking
- LinkedIn – building a professional profile, how to navigate the website, and how to maximize the benefits of this networking tool
- Career coaching services
- Interviewing strategies, techniques, and tips on interview follow-up
- Video-taped mock interviews
- Resume writing services and assistance in composing attention-grabbing cover letters

As a result of Bellevue College Project H.I.R.E. providing the above described services, the barriers that disabled job-seekers typically experience are virtually eliminated as the Bellevue College Project H.I.R.E. team provides candidates with the tools necessary to overcome these challenges and is also the vital bridge that links the employer to the candidate. For example, as a Schedule A candidate for federal employment, Shanon shared my resume with a hiring manager at a federal agency where she had developed vital relations and in doing so, the hiring manager expressed that he was impressed with my resume and wanted to schedule an interview to discuss how my skill-set could be utilized by his organization. As a result, not only did the hiring

manager create a position based upon my unique qualifications and contact me within one week to schedule an interview, the agency did not even publicly post the position for other candidates to consider.

As an epileptic who cannot drive, being a Project H.I.R.E. participant through Bellevue College was also a blessing on the day of my interview as Shanon drove me to the interview so that I could solely focus on my upcoming interview and arrive at the federal agency feeling vibrant, focused, and refreshed rather than overheated, frazzled, and distracted from having to take two buses on a hot summer afternoon to get there on time. Once again, I am convinced that it was the services provided by this program and the Bellevue College Project H.I.R.E. staff that bridged the gap, helped me overcome barriers that I had previously faced as a disabled job-seeker, and ultimately served as the springboard that allowed me to become a highly competitive candidate.

Throughout my interview, it was apparent that the hiring manager had learned quite a bit about me through the program staff advocating for me and as it concluded, the hiring manager simply stated that “you are an excellent match to what we are seeking in an employee, but I have to be honest and let you know that it could be up to six months before we can offer you a position because of the timeline required to hire a new employee”. Being that I was offered the position a mere 5 weeks after my interview, it goes without question that the Program’s staff continued contact with their Human Resources greatly expedited the hiring process and thus, Project H.I.R.E. continued to be of tremendous benefit to my candidacy after my interview, too.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that being a participant in Project H.I.R.E. through Bellevue College is an invaluable and highly critical resource for disabled job-seekers as I can attest to the incredible difference that being a participant in this program at Bellevue College has made in my career, quality of life, and ability to land a job in the most difficult job market since the Great Depression. Having landed a great job with excellent benefits is a dream come true. As a disabled job-seeker, the barriers and challenges of finding a new job in this economic climate seemed insurmountable, but with the assistance of Project H.I.R.E. at Bellevue College, not only was I able to overcome those barriers to employment, but I also landed a job that is much more than just another job – Project H.I.R.E. at Bellevue College opened the door and helped me land a stable and rewarding career path that will allow me to become a successful professional and contributing member of our community in spite of my disability.

With tremendous appreciation,

Diana M. Pfeifle